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READING KIERKEGAARD: TWO PITFALLS AND A STRATEGY FOR AVOIDING THEM

Patrick Goold

Søren Kierkegaard is an important thinker, especially important for those who wish to understand Christian faith. His elusive style, however, and certain distancing techniques make him particularly difficult to understand. The recent history of writings on Kierkegaard reveals a strong tendency to fall into one of two erroneous modes of interpretation. This essay is an attempt to rescue Kierkegaard both from muggings by 'rigorous' philosophers and from the morganatic embraces of Post-Modernists. It reviews the classical sources of each of these sorts of reading of Kierkegaard, exposes their mistakes, and suggests several appropriate principles of interpretation.

Kierkegaard has much to teach us. On the nature of religious faith, for example, there is no author since Paul who is more profound or more enlightening. Deciphering his message, however, is very difficult. For various reasons he writes so as to discourage the lazy reader and to perplex those with an unreflective cast of mind. Pseudonymity is only the most obvious way among many in which he has sought to foil the collectors of conclusions. But the deviousness of these devices and the difficulties they present to an honest and reflective reader have been greatly exaggerated by interpreters of Kierkegaard, often to the point of making nonsense of his work. Some see his writings as entirely poetic (ironic) and as unconcerned with the sort of truth that preoccupies science or philosophy. Others find it patently self-refuting. Both readings made Kierkegaard unworthy of rational criticism, the latter because he never gets off the ground, the former because he never touches down. Both views rest on a failure to read carefully and to make needed distinctions, and both are mistaken.

Every interpretation that makes Kierkegaard's writings opaque to rational analysis is based, it seems to me, upon a failure to make an obvious and elementary distinction between levels of discourse. Every such interpretation fails to distinguish between those passages in which Kierkegaard is 'existentializing' or 'doing existential philosophy' from those in which he is writing about the nature, content, structure, etc. of his existentializing. This familiar and useful distinction between discourse *within* a realm of discourse



and discourse *about* that realm is important here not because it allows us "to make inwardness academically respectable" or "to give human existence the dubious prestige of professorial sanction,"¹ but because it allows us to avoid making nonsense of Kierkegaard. The inanity of Kierkegaard resulting from failure to observe this distinction takes two forms. The form most commonly in evidence among philosophers might be called 'over-literalization,' the alternative 'over-poeticization.' Both approaches have the logical (if not always consciously intended) result of making Kierkegaard either self-refuting or vacuous.

Over-Literalization

Examples of the pitfalls of over-literalization abound. Climacus is the most prolific provocateur of interpretative failures of this sort, and of all the things he says none is more thoroughly misunderstood by literal-minded philosophers than the 'doctrine' that truth is subjectivity. A. E. Murphy, Paul Edwards, and Brand Blanshard, for example, all make the same sort of attack on subjective truth, a sort of attack that sensitivity to Climacus' therapeutic use of language would obviate. Murphy writes:

While it ostensibly turns away from the issue of objective truth, Kierkegaard's procedure presupposes such truth at every step in its retreat into recessive inwardness. His subjectivity is parasitic for its 'existential' significance on the assumed objective truth of a doctrine about man and God whose right to claim such truth it strives at every point to discredit.²

Edwards contends that "Kierkegaard reverts and must revert from the new sense of 'true' in which to say that a belief is true means no more than that it is held sincerely and without reservations, to the old sense in which it means that it is in accordance with the facts or with reality."³ And Blanshard thinks that the author of "truth is subjectivity," because of this ambiguity in his position, faces the following dilemma:

His philosophy terminates in a rejection of those very principles of logic on which he proceeded as a philosopher.... If the logic he assumes in his philosophy is valid, then the faith ('truth' would work equally well here) which stands at the summit of 'the stages on life's way' is meaningless. If that irrational faith is accepted, the principles on which reflection conducts itself are everywhere impugned. In that case, Kierkegaard...should remain silent.⁴

Murphy starts out on the right track here. The man who is "in the truth" in the Climacean sense does indeed "turn away" from the issue of objective truth, not merely ostensibly but in fact, and with total decisiveness. And the procedure by means of which he accomplishes this is precisely "to presuppose such truth at every step." For example, finding God objectively, i.e. proving his existence, is not a concern of the subjective thinker because he seizes his certainty directly, before the proof can ever begin. He is satisfied to have at once a

"militant certainty,"⁵ rather than wait for the completion of proofs to satisfy him. He does not, however, do this because he feels what he believes must be objectively false, but because he knows that the objective truth of what he believes cannot come to light in time. The distinction is large, and this is where the second part of Murphy's statement goes astray. He sees Climacus as attempting to discredit, for example, the believer's right to claim that God has in fact existed. Climacus does not deny that the believer holds his beliefs to be objectively true, this is not what his "turning away from the question to objective truth" amounts to at all. Rather he is denying that the believer can claim to know that his beliefs are true, indeed he takes it to be a requirement for faith that one understand the necessity of uncertainty in this manner.

All this is in the text, but obscure and difficult to grasp if one takes the point of "truth is subjectivity" to be a new conceptual determination of the property people have traditionally tried to get at with the notion of objective truth. This is not what is going on here. Climacus is using the term 'truth' in his definition in the sense in which it was commonly used by his contemporaries. He has Hegel in mind, and the Hegelian distinction between truth and correctness, truth being the according of a thing with its concept. Climacus employs this notion to define a very small subspecies of truth, the truth of an existing individual human being. Instead of redefining 'truth' Climacus is laying out what the truth (as commonly understood) of the individual consists in. The result is not a new 'truth' which is to usurp the role of the old one, but an explication of the 'old truth' applied to a new object, i.e. the single existing individual. It is called by the name 'subjective truth' because ultimately the 'objective' truth of the existing individual consists in his entire identification with his own subjectivity.

Of course, "truth is subjectivity" is not the most perspicuous formulation of such an insight. If one is pre-occupied with a different problematic, one that takes propositions to be the proper objects of belief and truth to be a property solely of propositions, then it is not surprising that one comes to the wrong conclusion. This less than perfectly perspicuous rendering, however, can be accounted for as more edifying than more patent ones.

The point of real existentializing is to open the eyes of one's readers to new ways of living and to move them to reshape their lives. The first step toward this goal is moving them to a passionate interest in the question. Climacus uses the verbal identity to emphasize the contextual difference between the truth of human existence and the truth of propositions. People alive to his edificatory purpose would not mistake him here. To ignore this purpose and to proceed as if Climacus were choosing his words for a disinterested academic audience is Murphy's downfall. It is also the misdirection in the accounts of Edwards and Blanshard.⁶

Misled by the literal (immanent) sense of "truth is subjectivity" into as-

suming that subjective truth is put forward as a REPLACEMENT for objective truth, Blanshard concludes that the search for subjective truth requires "a rejection of logic." And with this conclusion before his eyes he is blind to the genuine meta-position that justifies the edificatory rhetoric. Blanshard's picture could not be more misleading. Climacus gives an account of the necessary and (presumably) sufficient conditions for an individual human being to be true, or "in the truth." One of these conditions is dialectical insight into the impossibility in principle of attaining objective certainty concerning what is believed. Thus the subject who would be "in the truth" rather than being required to reject logic is obligated to reach a dialectically very sophisticated position with respect to his beliefs. "With all the strength of his mind, to the last thought, he must try to understand...and then despair of the understanding" [CUP, p. 201]. It is the attempt to understand that entitles him to despair, the latter without the former is unjustified, or more accurately, impossible.

Reason, in the Climacean scheme, provides an important service for faith. "The highest principles for all thought can be demonstrated only indirectly (negatively)" [CUP, p. 197]. The last three words are an important qualification of "demonstrated" but they by no means nullify it. The role of an indirect demonstration might still be very important indeed, as Climacus points out in the following: "For dialectics is in its truth a benevolent helper, which discovers and assists in finding where the absolute object of faith and worship is.... Dialectics⁷ itself does not see the absolute, but it leads, as it were, the individual up to it, and says: 'Here it must be, that I guarantee; when you worship here, you worship God' [CUP, p. 438f.]. It accomplishes all this "only indirectly," of course, i.e. it makes clear what the absolute is not. So, for example, it tells one that neither God nor an eternal happiness is such that it can be pointed out, pictured, imagined, described poetically, and so forth. It reveals that true religiousness is not such that any outward show is demanded. It proves that the object of belief is not an object of speculation as well, and that it is not something subject to confirmation or disconfirmation by the results of historical inquiry. Thus the picture Climacus draws of the relationship between faith and reason is this: reason's task is carefully and deeply to ponder the matters of infinite importance to us, and diligently to apply the standard of consistency⁸ to our conception of the matter and to the existential expression we have given it. If we adduce a conception and an expression for it which stands unfalsified by the dialectical scrutiny, then we are at a point where it is appropriate to believe our conception to be the right one.

This is not to say that our belief has been rationally justified, because all these dialectical labors take place within the framework of our belief, i.e. our belief constitutes the unargued-for presupposition of the search for consistency. It is passion alone which motivates one initially to embrace a given

framework. One might, for example, believe that pleasure is the ultimate goal of human existence and with this belief as datum dialectics might lead him to see that really to hold this one must become a 'solipsist of the present moment.' But if one were motivated by an infinite passion, such a solipsism would not be satisfying, and so one's passion would drive one to leap beyond it, into (say) the comfort of the ethical and its universality. At each stage dialectic, the critical use of our understanding, reveals to us the consistent formulation of an expression for what we believe, but this in no way justifies our adoption of that belief. This is a task, as Anti-Climacus will argue in *Sickness Unto Death*, for the passion itself. For these reasons the Hegelians are damned on two counts: they are dialectically inconsistent and completely lacking in passion; while Zeno is praised for the consistency of his life and doctrine, but ultimately rejected because a way of deeper passion is possible.

Ultimately, this search for the deepest possible passion is justified by appeal to an ethics of virtue, coupled with a definite theory about human nature, something Alasdair MacIntyre does not seem to recognize when he phrases the objection to Climacus in these terms:

If I hold that truth is subjectivity, what status am I to give to the denial of the proposition that truth is subjectivity? If I produce arguments to refute this denial I appear committed to the view that there are criteria by appeal to which the truth about truth can be vindicated. If I refuse to produce arguments, on the ground that there can be neither argument nor criteria in such a case, then I appear committed to the view that any view embraced with sufficient subjective passion is as warranted as any other in respect of truth, including the view that truth is not subjectivity. This inescapable dilemma is never faced by Kierkegaard and consequently he remains trapped by it.⁹

There is one fact, however, that is true at every stage on life's way and in every possible existential attitude: the person who occupies that stage is an existing individual. And if Climacus, who is at one stage, grasps what it means to be an existing human being in truth (and this is what the definition of truth is intended to describe), then he possesses a notion that is at least implicitly contained in all others. And if he can show that the truth of, e.g. the metaphysical sphere consistently followed contradicts this human truth, then he can show (since the metaphysician is himself human) that eo ipso the metaphysician contradicts himself existentially. Climacus has in this fact of existence an objective (in the sense that it is necessarily and universally applicable) criterion by which the validity of any existential stage may be evaluated. In Aristotelian terms, man's specific ergon, to do well at what is his virtue or specific excellence (and in one sense, his truth), is to maximize his own subjectivity. And Climacus can assert this as objectively true without thereby contradicting himself, and without committing himself to the equipollence of all objective assertions.

Climacus is not satisfied simply to state this imperative to maximize one's

subjectivity. He also undertakes the therapeutic task of producing this state in his readers. One of the tools he uses in doing this is compressed and pseudo-paradoxical language like "truth is subjectivity," in which familiar terms are purposely imported into new and unanticipated contexts to reveal new facets of the concepts they refer to. To make his doctrine clear, one might distinguish between truth in the sense of correctness, a sense in which only sentences and propositions are true, and truth in the sense of soundness in which any entity whatsoever may be true. Then the Climacean doctrine might be formulated as "The following is a correct assertion: 'A human being is sound when he or she maximizes his or her own subjectivity.'" But if one wishes to go beyond the mere statement of doctrine, and to proceed to the edification of one's readers, the original formulation might well be preferable. Forgetting that Climacus wants to go beyond mere statement in this way is the source of the mistakes of Murphy and company.

Over-literalization, of course, can take other forms. Many authors, thinking of one or another of the pseudonyms, take Kierkegaard to task for his one-sided and extreme view of Christianity. But to ignore the poetic indirection of the pseudonyms is to miss much of the point of the pseudonymous books and to turn Kierkegaard into a schizophrenic. Humor and irony are other means he uses to protect himself from being given a position of authority, and from being merely informative rather than edifying. I chose to focus on the trick of paradoxical word-choice only because it has led to a particularly pervasive and egregious misunderstanding.

Over-Poeticization

In *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet*, Louis Mackey established himself as the over-poeticizer laureate. Emphasizing the edificatory function of the pseudonyms at the expense of the meta-theoretical ideas that inform the edificatory project, Mackey unintentionally volatilizes Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard's books are reduced to rhetorical smoke, the substance of his discourse dispersed. "Kierkegaard's poetic is at once a rhetoric designed to coerce its reader to freedom," and in so doing it "deprives him of any warrant for action except his own freedom." Is there no warrant whatsoever? Then all the argument of the pseudonyms is sham. "The Kierkegaardian corpus can neither be 'believed' nor 'followed': it is and was meant to be—poetically—the impetus, the occasion, and the demand for the reader's own advance to selfhood and to a solitary meeting with the divine."¹⁰ For the most part this is an eloquent statement of the edifying purpose of Kierkegaard's authorship. In the denial of "any warrant" for acting in a certain way, however, it goes too far, making Kierkegaard's position self-undermining in much the same way that Blanshard's over-literal reading does.

For what is Mackey's evidence that so single-minded a focus on inwardness

was Kierkegaard's intention? He quotes Johannes Climacus. But why is this to the point? Because Climacus has a meta-theory about subjective truth that shows WHY it cannot be communicated directly, and why the pseudonyms, the humor and irony, the paradoxical language, etc., are necessary. This, however, is to the point only if at least some of what Climacus says can itself be believed to be objectively true. But this is precisely what Mackey denies, hence his over-emphasis of the poetic undermines his own argument for that emphasis. Josiah Thompson is more consistent when he labels even the doctrine of indirect communication part of the pseudonymous charade.¹¹

The schizophrenia of Mackey's position is compactly expressed in his statements about Kierkegaard's intentions. He speaks of "the impropriety of presuming to read Kierkegaard's mind" and maintains that "taken as instruments of his intent, his works add up to a magnificent nonsense."¹² But I have already quoted a passage in which Mackey claims to know the purpose for which Kierkegaard's poetic is designed, and of course, telling us what Kierkegaard intended by this profusion of ink is precisely what every commentator, including Mackey, has as his central task. Mackey knows this. The final paragraph of his book makes reference to "Kierkegaard's thought," "the mind of Kierkegaard," and even what it is "to understand Kierkegaard." What he doesn't see is that this is impossible if nothing in the authorship can be taken to be intended as literal truth, or can be mapped onto the literally true.

It might be objected that although Mackey has made a tactical blunder here, the damage can be easily repaired. Frequently, instead of quoting Climacus or another pseudonym to support his views, Mackey quotes *The Point of View*, *Journals and Papers*, or some other non-pseudonymous work. And were he consistent about this, so the counter runs, he would have a stable meta-position, the "real" Kierkegaard, to argue from. Stephen Evans argues for a view like this. After correctly noting that to say Kierkegaard's views are independent of those of his pseudonyms is not to say that Kierkegaard's views are in every case opposed to those of his pseudonyms, he continues:¹³

As a matter of fact, it is not hard to show that a good many of the opinions expressed by the pseudonyms were held by Kierkegaard himself. The method whereby this can be done is simply to compare the pseudonymous works with works that Kierkegaard wrote under his own name and with his opinions as expressed in his *Journals and Papers*.

Although I have at one time found this position attractive, I believe it now to be unsafe. The occasion of this change was Henning Fenger's *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origins*. Fenger argues plausibly that Kierkegaard was a poet even in his putatively private writings, that he falsified, poeticized, tidied and 'corrected' historical facts throughout his letters and journals, and that even in these writings Kierkegaard was engaged in a literary production. Where literal truth is our goal, we are no better off looking in the letters and

journals, and by extension, the other non-pseudonymous works, than in the pseudonymous ones.¹⁴ To put it the other way round, there is no *a priori* ground for rejecting the meta-theoretical material contained in the pseudonymous works. The remaining problem is to establish a criterion by means of which one can decide when and how to take a given pseudonym seriously.

The Correct Approach

When he is not trying to convince us that Kierkegaard is "only poetry," Mackey is aware that sometimes the pseudonyms must be taken at their word. He admits that "there is some truth to be found in the mouth of each of the pseudonyms." He is even willing to admit that "in a sense the whole truth, as Kierkegaard understood it, is found in each of the works."¹⁵ It is, however, distorted by partiality. Mackey suggests the following methodological principle for those who would sort the chaff of partiality from the kernel of truth: "whatever truth and reality is imagined in the Kierkegaardian corpus must be sought in the internal organization of the several works and in the reciprocal limitation and reinforcement they offer each other."¹⁶ This, I think is sound as far as it goes and it is the main source of my confidence in my reading of Kierkegaard. I am convinced, for example, that the notion of obedience is central to Kierkegaard's understanding of faith, because pseudonyms as different from one another as De Silentio, Climacus, and Anti-Climacus, characters who are described as being at different stages of intellectual and ethical insight, take up this theme again and again and develop it in similar ways. Moreover, the theme of 'obedience as the heart of religious faith' runs through the *Journals and Papers*, and many of the non-pseudonymous published works such as *On Authority and Revelation*, *Of The Difference Between a Genuis and an Apostle*, and several of the *Edifying Discourses*. That sources so dissimilar in other ways offer "reciprocal reinforcement" to each other in specifying the relationship between obedience and faith indicates that this relationship is part of the literal, meta-theoretical kernel of Kierkegaard's thought. The focus on obedience shows clearly through the partiality of the various pseudonyms.

If this is correct, then there is an interpretative principle that readers of Kierkegaard can rely on: the more generally a theme is found in Kierkegaard's writings, and the greater the similarity in the conclusions of the various treatments of this theme, the more likely it is that something like the view one can derive from these treatments was actually held by Kierkegaard. This principle gives us a means of justifying the claim that, Mackey and Thompson to the contrary notwithstanding, genuinely substantive conclusions can be drawn from the Kierkegaardian corpus.

A second justification for reading Kierkegaard with philosophical seriousness can be drawn from an application of the reciprocal reinforcement prin-

ciple to his writings. To the objection that an approach so 'didactic' cannot lay hold of a 'subjective' author, i.e. one who communicates 'indirectly,' it is enlightening to examine the evidence that Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms have left us in the form of their actual practice on this score. This practice is observable in diverse parts of the authorship, it is sufficiently uniform as fairly to be called the same practice, and it is clearly at variance with the volatilizing approach of, for example, Thompson. To cite some of the clearer examples: (1) Kierkegaard frequently interprets the work of the pseudonyms in *Journals and Papers*, and comes to definite conclusions about what they meant. See, for example, *Journals and Papers* 11,¹⁷ in which Kierkegaard sorts out the difference between "the absurd" in *Fear and Trembling* and "the paradox" in CUP. His technique implies that this is a close reading by a third party, but it does not suggest that there is nothing clear to be gotten from these books. In fact, it suggests precisely the reverse, it suggests that they will stand up to very close critical scrutiny. (2) Anti-Climacus refers to the work of Johannes Climacus, and not to turn him into poetry, but to cite him as an authority with whom Anti-Climacus is in clear agreement.¹⁸ Moreover, this agreement is with respect to the very doctrine that the poeticizers would use to evaporate the pseudonyms, indirect communication. (3) Climacus [in CUP, pp. 225-66] surveys much of the previous pseudonymous literature, and even a book by "Magister Kierkegaard" himself. And he does not suggest that what is written there is something that can have no literal sense for him. In fact, he opens by saying that in *Either/Or* "was realized precisely what I had proposed to myself to do" [CUP, p. 225]. He allows that there is room for interpretation. Nevertheless, the "misused" in the following quotation gives evidence that he thinks it is possible to determine what is right in it.

Every time I read through such a pseudonymous work, it became clearer to me what I had intended to do. In this manner I became a tragically interested witness of the productions of Victor Eremita and the other pseudonyms. Whether my interpretation is the same as that of the authors, I can of course not know with certainty, since I am only a reader; on the other hand, it gives me pleasure to see that the pseudonyms, presumably aware of the relation subsisting between the method of indirect communication and the truth as inwardness, have themselves said nothing, nor misused a preface to assume an official attitude toward the production, as if an author were in a purely legal sense the best interpreter of his own words.... [CUP, p. 225]

The quotation also contains, I think, a description of the major fault which it is the function of pseudonymity to avoid: the assumption of "an official attitude toward the production," i.e. putting it forward as if one had the authority to proclaim it objectively. If it is correct to see this as the main function of the device of pseudonymity, then probably much too much has been made of this device and the notion of indirect communication by the poeticizing school.

(4) Perhaps the most striking example of the proper way of approaching a "subjective" author is Climacus' reading of Lessing in the second book of CUP [pp. 67-114]. Its conclusions are the same: one should be grateful to Lessing because he maintains his distance and does not directly proclaim his insights into the religious. Why is this something to be grateful for? Because it preserves and strengthens the edifying, rather than the merely informative, function of Lessing's writing. We are to be grateful to him because the literal truths to which he has worked his way are framed in such a way that we are forced to think our way to them, and through them, for ourselves. And this is a benefit to us because the truths are about the proper mode of existing as a human being, something we should not only wish to know, but to do. In short, we should be grateful to Lessing for writing as he did for reasons much different from the ones that oblige us to admire Rimbaud.

Of course, if all the texts have a pseudonymous taint (including *Journals and Papers* and the letters), and if it is largely on the "reciprocal reinforcement" of the pseudonyms that one must rely, then it will never be possible to say that one's interpretation is the one correct description of Kierkegaard's intentions. Every interpreter of Kierkegaard will need to keep in mind a caveat similar to the one with which Climacus prefaces his discussion of Lessing in CUP:

Without presuming to appeal to Lessing or daring to cite him definitely as my authority, without pledging anyone because of Lessing's fame dutifully to understand or profess to understand that which brings him into embarrassing connection with my obscurity...I now propose to set forth what, in spite of all, I refer to Lessing, although uncertain whether he would acknowledge it.

But one ought not to make too much of this necessary humility.

That all our ascriptions must to some extent be tentative is finally of little consequence. First of all, it is a sufficient ground for invoking Kierkegaard's name that one's account is a possible interpretation of his work, that one has arguments in its favor, and that it explains certain aspects of the texts that are not otherwise well understood. Secondly, and more importantly, the goal of the philosophical reader is enlightenment, and to the project of understanding, for example, the actual structure of religious faith, meticulous scholarly questions about the correct attribution of views to Kierkegaard are irrelevant. The philosophical reader simply need not address them. Evans states the case well when he says:

Biographers and intellectual historians have a right to examine the pseudonymous literature and use it as best they can to fulfill their goals of understanding Kierkegaard's life and thought. (Though in view of Kierkegaard's warnings they should employ extreme caution in doing so.) But if our purposes are essentially personal and philosophical—if we are interested in the truth of the views presented, in understanding more profoundly some basic existential concepts, and thereby understanding ourselves and our existence

more deeply—then it really does not matter very much whether Kierkegaard personally held these views. For from the fact that he held a view nothing follows as to the truth, profundity, or value of the view.¹⁹

This said, however, it does not follow that Kierkegaard disappears from the scene. If by reading and reflecting on his work we are lead to views both true and profound, then we owe him grateful acknowledgement whether or not we can say with certainty that these are precisely the views he intended us to find there. Such acknowledgement is entirely consistent with the 'doctrines' of indirect communication and the subjectivity of truth.

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NOTES

1. Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 292.

2. A. E. Murphy, "On Kierkegaard's Claim That 'Truth Is Subjectivity,'" in *Reason and the Common Good* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 178.

3. Paul Edwards, "Kierkegaard and the 'Truth' of Christianity," *Philosophy* 46 (1971):97.

4. Brand Blanshard, "Kierkegaard on Faith," *Personalist* 49 (1968):p. 15.

5. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. D. Swenson and W. Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 199. Hereafter referred to as CUP.

6. Climacus' procedure of using language in this way is perhaps the same procedure Cavell describes as the "dialectical examination of a concept." See Stanley Cavell, "Kierkegaard's *On Authority and Revelation*" in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 169f. Such an examination shows, says Cavell, "how the subject of which it is the concept changes, as the context in which it is used changes: the dialectical meaning is the history or confrontation of these differences." The point is the same; the telos of the dialectical procedure is not to be more accurate, but to connect with, and to change, the reader.

7. The relation between Kierkegaardian dialectics and the Kantian procedure for detecting the necessary illusions of reason is an interesting topic for speculation.

8. For a good discussion of Kierkegaard's use of the concept of consistency as a philosophic tool see Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), chapter II.

9. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Existentialism," in *Sartre*, (ed.) M. Warnock (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1971), p. 8. See also AFTER VIRTUE (1984). Esp. 39-43.

10. All of the above quotations are from Louis Mackey, *Kierkegaard: A Kind of Poet* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), p. 294.

11. Josiah Thompson, *Kierkegaard* (New York: Knopf, 1973), p. 185.

12. Mackey, pp. 292 and 290, respectively.

13. C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's "Fragments" and "Postscripts": The Religious Philosophy of Johannes Climacus* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), p. 8.

14. Henning Fenger, *Kierkegaard: The Myths and Their Origin*, trans. G. C. Schoolfield (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

15. Mackey, p. 261.

16. *Ibid.*

17. The number refers to the entry number in the edition of *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* edited and translated by Howard and Edna Hong and published by Indiana University Press in 1967-78.

18. *Training in Christianity*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), pp. 132-33.

19. Evans, pp. 8-9.